Consortium Meeting on RiFLE Project

On 21-22.03.2013 the University of Transport (VTU) hosted the consortium meeting on the RiFLE project ("Rail Freight and Logistics Curriculum Development"). The event was attended by representatives of the University of Newcastle (UK), project coordinator, and the partner universities: the University "La Sapienza", Rome (Italy), University of Transport (VTU), Sofia (Bulgaria) and the University of Applied Sciences in Ingolstadt (Germany). The participants discussed the tasks to be finished until the end of the project, which will result in the development of a handbook and Conference at the University of Newcastle.

The emphasis of discussion during the meeting was put on the possibilities of signing agreements between the partner universities to issue double degrees/diplomas in MSc program developed. The discussion was attended also by Assoc. Prof. Dr Rumen Uluchev, Vice-Rector for Education of the VTU, and Assoc. Prof. Dr Luiz Lopes from Brazil who specializes in the NewRail Centre at the University of Newcastle.

The project consortium had a meeting also with the students who were on mobility visit to the VTU within the project. The purpose of their one-week trainings at the partner universities is to obtain additional information on rail freight and logistics through lectures, seminars and technical visits. The mobility programme of students demonstrates that consultations on the topics of students research projects and MSc theses are possible, creating a promising environment for joint supervision with the future joint programme in rail freight and logistics.

The RiFLE Final Conference

The final conference of RiFLE project took place on Thursday 19th September 2013 in Newcastle, UK. Industry representatives and educators attended the event to learn about the RiFLE project outcomes and discuss the curriculum developed during the project. Morning sessions, delivered by the consortium members, were focused on RiFLE surveys and analysis, curriculum design and validation as well as on implementation. Newcastle University representatives showed examples of their rail teaching portfolio, which includes collaborations at school level (e.g. transport Newcastle challenges) as well as at university level (summer school, Master programme, Continuing Professional Development courses, PhD opportunities, etc.).

In the afternoon the discussions were dedicated to university and industry engagement in rail education.

RiFLE is a new CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT project funded under the ERASMUS Programme of the European Commission. This project began on 1 October 2010 and will run for three years.
The RiFLE Final Conference

The main conclusion made is that the industry expects a clear business case before engagements with universities can be set up and differences between education and training must be recognised.

The participants debated also on pros and cons of joint degrees, which are an excellent tool for sharing knowledge and competences but can be just a one-way partnership. The live discussion showed that this topic is worth exploring further.

Discussion on joint degrees in QuILT

The possibility to establish joint degrees based on the results of the Rifle project was the reason to organize a meeting at the Quality in Learning and Teaching (QuILT) with the Newcastle University. The event was attended by the partners from HEIs interested in establishment of such programmers: the Newcastle University, the University of Rome “La Sapienza” (Italy) and the University of Transport (VTU), Sofia (Bulgaria).

Dr Ellie Clewlow, Head of QuILT, explained that Initial Proposal Template (IPT) is the first step for joint degree approval process. Academic content of the programme, recruitment process, English level, division of responsibilities and management, fees, etc. need to be discussed and described in the proposal. She also reminded that it is important to decide who is responsible for what and how decisions are made. Publicity is very important, as partners will need to be careful with the information disseminated in order not to promise anything that cannot be delivered.

Dr Marin Marinov from UNEW presented the idea that students will complete the 1st semester at a partner university and the next two, including the development of the MSc thesis, in Newcastle. The recruitment process might be at 2 stages, so that mobility (receiving a joint degree from 2 universities) will be offered to those who meet the requirements of the programme.

Dr Ellie Clewlow suggested that it might be worth thinking about a long-term plan for the partnership: how the programme will work in year 1 and how it will work in year 5. Having agreed that the benefits are for staff (building capacity) as well as for students, all parties decided to look at the Initial Proposal Template in the nearest future.
Publications

**Handbook:**

It summarises all the merits of material developed during the lifetime of the RiFLE project. This deliverable provides the necessary background and useful information to assist individuals and agencies interested in rail freight and logistics higher education and the RiFLE activities at large.

**Chapter 1** presents state of the art, where questionnaire design for collecting data on existing educational programmes in transport and logistics is described and data collected is analysed. **Chapter 2** describes the process of curriculum modelling with the focus on competences at academic level. **Chapter 3** discusses identification of framework, including staff demands in rail freight and logistics sector as well as details of developing a Master programme framework based on the Bologna requirements. **Chapter 4** presents details of curriculum development for rail freight and logistics Master programme and presents five levels of student mobility identified within the project. **Chapter 5** focuses on two-folded validation of curricula: firstly against European standards and secondly against industry requirements.

**Chapter 6** is dedicated to exploitation and implementation results of the RiFLE project, with particular focus on industry involvement, innovative teaching and learning methods and lessons learnt from the pilot mobility exercise.

The Handbook is available at the RiFLE website: [www.rifle-project.eu](http://www.rifle-project.eu).

**Article:**